

The roll of Standard VI. was 181: of these, 176 presented themselves for examination, eighty were awarded certificates of proficiency, twenty-nine certificates of competency, sixty-seven failed to qualify for either. The proficiency certificate is practically the former Standard VI. certificate. The requirements of the competency certificate are met by competence in fewer subjects. The above numbers reduced to percentage show 44·8 per cent. gained proficiency, 16·2 per cent. competency, and 38 per cent. failed to qualify. While the number in Standard VI. increased greatly (from 164 to 181) the average age decreased from 14 years 2 months in 1903 to 13 years 9 months, which is below the mean (13 years 10 months) for the colony. As 80 per cent. of the pupils present in Standard VI. passed in 1903 probably many very old pupils left the schools.

Unless the competency certificate for Standard VI. be introduced with a view to preparing the way for an abandonment of geography and drawing as pass subjects, it is difficult to see what purpose it serves. Cases can easily be conceived where one could obtain the proficiency certificate and yet fail to obtain the competency. In New Zealand it does not appear right to lay so much stress on English subjects as is required in America where the difficulty of dealing with a great alien immigration necessarily makes the teaching of that language a matter of first importance. (In the Junior Civil Service Examination the marks for English are equal to those assigned to three others out of the five subjects.) A working-knowledge of English is not so difficult for a New Zealand boy to obtain. It is, on the other hand, highly desirable that, as a needful corrective one in so isolated a region as New Zealand, we should make geography a speciality rather than a superfluity. Additional importance should also be attached to civics and economics. "Anarchy or despotism," says a great French writer, "has been the fate of those nations whose people became free before they became enlightened." The movements that take place in the political world in New Zealand, Australia, and further afield, especially those that result in Labour Ministries, show that, as a corrective to partial views, there is urgent need for a close study of economics in the schools. In schools where a boy who has gained a proficiency certificate continues on with the intention of pursuing his studies further the head teacher is recommended to choose from the list of subjects set forth for the Junior Civil Service Examination such a number as will in due course lead his pupil up to that test.

The fifty-seven schools examined may be classified as follows: Good, 7; satisfactory, 26; fair, 15; moderate, 9.

A general summary for the whole district, extracted from the annual report is appended:—

Classes.					Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
							Yrs. mos.
Standard VII.	...	...	...	...	34	30	14 10
" VI.	...	...	...	...	181	176	13 9
" V.	...	...	...	...	204	203	12 9
" IV.	...	...	...	...	231	225	12 0
" III.	...	...	...	...	261	251	11 0
" II.	...	...	...	...	274	261	9 8
" I.	...	...	...	...	232	228	8 8
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	518	460	7 0
Totals	...	...	...	...	1,935	1,834	11 3*

\* Mean of average age.

The teachers in the employ of the Board are classified as follows:—Head teachers—certificated 11; assistants—certificated 11, uncertificated 3; sole teachers—certificated 13, uncertificated 37: total 75. There are also nine pupil-teachers.

The regulations for examination of the pupil-teachers are still under revision by the Department. During the past year these young people have been seriously hampered in their studies by the indefiniteness of requirements and the sudden change in the middle of April from the programme of former years to that of the Junior Civil Service—one much more difficult. The special text-books also were not named till April. The result of this examination could therefore hardly be expected to do credit either to the pupil-teachers or to their instructors. In addition to the Department's examination the pupil-teachers were tested by myself in reading, recitation, and writing. To this, during 1905, will be added a special examination by "criticism lesson."

**SPECIAL SUBJECTS.—Reading:** The new syllabus prescribes two books for each standard; this should improve the reading, which is not as a rule fluent. There was a painful frequency of simultaneous work, in imitation of the teacher phrase by phrase. When pupils so trained were asked to read a whole paragraph by themselves they showed a hesitancy that betokened a want of self-reliance. The blackboard appeared never to be used to illustrate graphically the modulation of the voice, the general character of the reading being somewhat horizontal and monotonous. The sewing-hour can frequently be utilised for practice—the pupils in turns reading aloud page by page from an interesting story-book while their classmates ply their needles. This means of giving practice in lengthy passages is adopted in other districts with much profit. In many of the schools comprehension was far from ready. In the lower classes oral composition and spelling should be correlated with reading to a much greater extent than appears to have been done. An appreciation of literary beauties should be cultivated as far as may be from the lowest standards upwards—e.g., "A Song for Little May," which appears in the Imperial Reader for Standard I., has many striking combinations that would well repay study by the